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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, November 4, 1938.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Pumpkin and Sweet Potatoes". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Old maids and bachelors are authorities on some subjects, so we're told. Old maids have the most perfect ideas on child training. And as for bachelors, they're wonderful cooks--if you catch them at a safe distance from the kitchen. And about this time of year they usually have one specialty--it's pumpkin pie.

And what a handy subject to argue about.

"To spice, or not to spice", and how much, that's the first question. Will you have your pumpkin pie snappy with ginger, or sweetly spiced with cinnamon and cloves, and a sprinkling of nutmeg? Are you a "stand-patter" or can you gracefully accept squash or sweetpotato in place of pumpkin?

It's all a matter of taste, according to specialists of the Bureau of Home Economics, so don't try to settle the argument.

But if you're kitchen cook you'll find it takes something more than taste to build a delicious pumpkin pie.

First, you'll need your pumpkin well cooked down, thick and not a bit watery. Then, when you add the milk and eggs you'll have a thick, rich custard, not all thinned out with pumpkin juice.

Because it takes so long to cook pumpkin on top of the stove, more and more women are using canned pumpkin in pies. The steam pressure canner cooks pumpkin in a quarter of the time it takes to boil it in an open kettle. And the canned product's ready to use any time of year.

Then if you want a crisp undercrust in your pumpkin pie, bake the shell a little first before you add the custard. That way you'll get crisp crust with both the filling and piecrust baked enough, but not too much.

But if we want to get down to bedrock on the subject of pumpkin pies, we'll have to go farther back than the kitchen. We'll have to start in the garden, or at the corner grocery.

To begin with, scientists of the Department of Agriculture, now tell us that those ideas about "frost on the punkin'" are all wrong. They say frost does nothing whatever to enrich the flavor of the pumpkin or squash, and it greatly injures their keeping qualities.

And sweetpotatoes, pumpkin and squash keep best in a dry place that's neither warm nor cold. Say, about 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

And here's also a "how" about buying at the grocery store.

When you're after sweetpotatoes, you'll choose between a moist and a dry type. Usually that depends on how you're going to use the sweetpotatoes on the menu. For baking many people like the dry type. They're mealy and sweet. For pie or for candied "sweets", the moist type is usually best.

But whether you choose the moist or dry type you'll want medium sized sweetpotatoes, plump ones with rounded ends, instead of long, pointed ones. And they should be firm and smooth without any black places or bruises.

Or if you're after pumpkin or squash, here are some tips. First, pick one that's medium sized. For the biggest ones may be coarse, and the smallest ones are too likely to be immature.

Look over the pile for some that have a bright, clear color. And then lift over these to find one that's heavy for its size. A pumpkin or squash that's heavy for its size will give you more meat. And besides, plant breeders say the heavy ones are more likely to be tender than the lightweight ones.

And speaking of food value, it was the dietitians that hit upon the idea of grouping sweetpotatoes with pumpkin and squash. They'll all yellow, and that's one sign in their favor. A yellow color usually means a rich source of vitamin A, and sweetpotatoes, squash, and pumpkins are rich in this vitamin. And besides vitamin A, these vegetables furnish at least some of two other vitamins, B and G.

And here are a couple more tips for the cook. Have you tried scalloped sweetpotatoes with raw apple or crushed pineapple? You'll want to cook the sweetpotatoes in their jackets first, until they're tender.

And if you like a bit of "dessert" during the dinner course, there's the old favorite, candied sweetpotatoes. They'll have a richer flavor and be more glistening and translucent if you use corn sirup for candying them. Use about 2 parts of sirup to 1 of sugar. Or for something really different try honey or maple sirup.

And here's an excellent use for leftover pumpkin or squash that's often overlooked. Add half a cup or so to cornbread batter. The cooked squash will make it soft and moist.

That's all the pumpkin and sweetpotato news for today.

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